

JOINT MEETING OF THE
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
AUGUSTA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY
ROOM 803, MUNICIPAL BUILDING, AUGUSTA, GEORGIA
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2004, 9:30 A.M.

Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission

George Patty
Paul DeCamp
Lynn Russell
Sangeetha Rao
Juriah Lewis

Augusta-Richmond County

Heyward Johnson
Dennis Ellis
Travis Davidson

City of Aiken

Sandra Korbelik

City of North Augusta

Skip Grkovic

CAC

Les Morton
Willie Bell

Aiken County

Stephen Strohminger
Jeanene Knapp

GA DOT

Mike Thomas
David Griffin
Radney Simpson
Beth Edmiston
Tony Sack

Columbia County

Ronnie Hutto
Tim Young

SC DOT

Brian Fulmer
Machael Peterson

FHWA

Chetna Dixon - SC
Carlos Gonzales - GA

Eric Schumacher, Terry Smith, Phil Croll, and Ben Donaldson were not able to attend, but have e-mailed their vote on the items. Butch Gallop was also not able to attend so he submitted his vote by phone after the meeting. This made a quorum for the CAC.

- 1. Consider approval of the minutes from the joint TCC and CAC meeting held on February 12, 2003.**

Mr. Smith sent an e-mail prior to the meeting to point out an error on page two, third sentence. "September" should be December.

CAC - Mr. Bell moved and Mr. Morton seconded the motion to approve the February 11, 2004 minutes with the above correction. The minutes were unanimously approved.

TCC - Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Hutto seconded the motion to approve the February 11, 2004 minutes with the above correction. The minutes were unanimously approved.

2. Issues and Concerns

(a) Prior

At the last meeting Mr. Smith had mentioned that Gordon Highway is a gateway to Fort Gordon and its condition helps shape opinion on Augusta. He has a group that would consider adopting part of the road to keep clean. GA DOT confirmed in an e-mail that a clean-up is scheduled for March 20, 2004 with a rain date of March 27, 2004. The highway will be cleaned from Walton Way to Gate 1 at Fort Gordon.

(b) Current / New

There were no new issues or concerns.

3. Consider recommendation to approve an amendment to the FY 2004 Unified Planning Work Program by reducing the South Carolina portion of FY 03 Special Studies funds by \$62,500 and increasing the FY 04 Special Studies work element by \$62,500. These funds will help pay for the North Augusta Access Management Study.

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. This is being changed for bookkeeping purposes since the project is almost complete.

CAC - Mr. Bell moved and Mr. Morton seconded the motion to approve this amendment to the FY 04 UPWP. The motion was approved unanimously.

TCC - Mr. Grkovic moved and Mr. Ellis seconded the motion to approve this amendment to the FY 04 UPWP. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Consider recommendation to approve the final FY 2005 Unified Planning Work Program.

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. A summary of the UPWP was sent out with the agenda. Since the agenda was mailed, Aiken County requested adding \$90,000 in carryover PL funds, to the Special Studies work element budget. A revised UPWP budget sheet was distributed showing the additional funds for two special studies projects. One of the studies would develop a concept for at least one east-west connector between Whiskey and Powderhouse Road. The second report would develop a concept for and a north-south connector road parallel to Whiskey Road. The study would determine possible alternative route centerlines. The studies would not include any preliminary engineering for the projects. The estimated cost for the Whiskey/ Powderhouse Road Connector Study would be \$40,000 (\$32,000 PL and \$8,000 City of Aiken local match), and the estimated cost of the North/ South Connector Road Study would be \$50,000 (\$40,000 PL and \$10,000 City of Aiken local match)

FHWA comments on the UPWP will be addressed as the full document is finalized. The comments do not affect the budget.

CAC - Mr. Morton moved and Mr. Bell seconded the motion to approve the final FY 05 UPWP. The motion was approved unanimously.

TCC - Mr. Grkovic moved and Mr. Young seconded the motion to approve the final FY 05 UPWP. The motion was approved unanimously.

5. Consider a recommendation to add a project to the ARTS Long Range Transportation Plan: SR 56/Mike Padgett Highway - add a 5th lane from Old Waynesboro Road to New Savannah Rd/Doug Barnard Parkway.

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. The GA DOT District Office requested this project due to concerns voiced by property owners, residents and industries along a three-mile section of Highway 56 between Old Waynesboro Road and Doug Barnard Parkway. There have been fatalities along this section of Highway 56 (Mike Padgett Hwy.). The intersection improvement project at Goshen Road will be let for bids in the near future. North and south of this section, Highway 56 is five lanes, except for a four-lane, 0.67-mile section from Southern Glassine Rd. (CR 885) south to Bennock Mill Rd. (CR 17). Correspondence from another manufacturing plant located near this four-lane section indicates one employee was killed and another injured in separate accidents. GA DOT has developed preliminary cost estimate for the widening of the three-mile section of Highway 56 between Old Waynesboro Road and Doug Barnard Parkway. ARTS staff recommends that the project be added to the Long Range Plan with a request to GA DOT to extend the termini to include the four-lane, 0.67-mile section from Southern Glassine Rd. (CR 885) south to Bennock Mill Rd. (CR 17).

Mr. Griffith indicated there would be no problem looking into this extension.

CAC - Mr. Bell moved and Mr. Morton seconded the motion to approve the addition of this project to the ARTS Long Range Transportation Plan with an extension of the termini as recommended by ARTS staff. The motion was approved unanimously.

TCC - Mr. Simpson moved and Mrs. Korbelik seconded the motion to approve the addition of this project to the ARTS Long Range Transportation Plan with an extension of the termini as recommended by ARTS staff. The motion was approved unanimously.

6. Early Action Compact – An Air Quality Initiative

(a) Aiken County

Mr. Strohminger presented this item. Aiken County has met all the milestones at this point. A meeting will probably be scheduled for next month. A meeting is also scheduled for Thursday with DHEC on CMAQ funding.

(b) Richmond County

Ms. Rao presented this item. The State of Georgia, in accordance with milestones in the EAC, sent a six-month progress report to EPA on December 31, 2003. Ms. Rao offered to provide a copy of the report to anyone who wants one. EPA will make an ozone non-attainment designation in April and designations regarding particulate matter (PM 2.5) are expected later in the year. A new low sulfur gasoline, which produces less ozone when burned, will be introduced in 2005. This gasoline is already in use in Atlanta.

Mr. DeCamp explained that last November Georgia EPD submitted 2003 air quality data to the US EPA. Richmond County is in attainment based on the combination of 2001, 2002 and 2003 data. EPA will

make ozone non-attainment designations nationwide on April 15th. Richmond County will continue to participate in the EAC because air quality data is adjusted annually and one bad year can mean the difference between attainment and non attainment.

7. Update on Special Studies Projects

(a) Whiskey Rd. - Silver Bluff Rd. Connector Study

Mr. Strohming presented this item. This study is essentially complete. The special subcommittee will meet on February 25th to review property impact. They received a list of all property owners on all the corridors. The subcommittee is hoping to be able to finalize a decision at this meeting as to which route will be chosen.

(b) North Augusta Access Management Study

Mr. Grkovic presented this item. The study is in the final stages of internal review and close to completion. Minor modifications will be made as the project advances to address the items that were missed during the study process. The study should be completed and incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance within the next two or three months.

(c) Columbia County Transportation Study

Mr. Young presented this item. The study is now in draft form and has been delivered for review. As the document is finalized several identified projects will be forwarded to the ARTS for recommendation for inclusion in the Long Range Plan and Transportation Improvement Program.

(d) ARTS Long Range Transportation Plan

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. The consultant URS has been working on background information for a couple months. URS staff made a two-day site visit in December and met with some planning partners to go over information and to secure needed documents. The consultant should be in town later this month to finalize plans for the first round of public meetings to be held in late February or early March.

Addendum

Mr. Morton moved to add the status of project reports to the agenda. Mr. Bell seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

8. Status of Project Reports

(a) Georgia Highways

Mr. Griffith presented this item.

- ♦ Plans and right-of-way are 100% complete on the bridge replacement at Crawford Creek (PI#0000809). This project will go out for bids in April.
- ♦ Right-of-way plans are 60% complete and should be complete by spring on the safety improvements project on Washington Road at Gibbs Road (PI#0003662). This project will be let in early 2005.
- ♦ The right-of-way acquisition is 85% complete. This is a joint effort with Augusta Public Works and DOT on the grade separation project of Parham Road at CSX railroad (PI#271040). There are seven parcels to be acquired. Acquisition of the remaining right-of-way is expected to be complete in the near future. This project should also be out for bids before the end of the fiscal year (by July 1st).
- ♦ Plans are complete and right-of-way acquired on the intersection improvement project at SR 56 and New Goshen Road (PI#0001319). This project is scheduled to be let for bids in April.
- ♦ A public information open house was held on February 5, 2004 on the 15th Street widening project (PI#220680). Approximately 50 people attended. The next phase will be approval of the concept plan and then the environmental document.
- ♦ The initial concept team meeting was held on January 20, 2004 on the ATMS/Transportation Command Center project (PI#227810). Concept development should begin soon. Letting date is scheduled for FY 2005.

(b) South Carolina Highways.

Ms. Peterson presented this item

- ♦ Construction on the Palmetto Parkway (Bobby Jones Expressway) Phase I is 84% complete. The project completion date is June 2004.
- ♦ Preliminary engineering is underway on Palmetto Parkway Phase 2. Right-of-way acquisition is scheduled to begin in April 2004. Funding has been identified for right-of-way, however approximately \$100 million is needed for construction. Mr. Grkovic visited Washington DC February 2, 2004 to lobby for additional funds.
- ♦ Construction is approximately 65% complete on the SC 118 widening project. Project completion date is late April 2004.
- ♦ The Georgia Avenue Extension project was advertised for professional services in the January 4, 2004 edition of the South Carolina Business Opportunities. The scope of the project was revised to include the North Augusta Riverfront Extensions. Letters of interest and consultant qualifications have been submitted to the department. A Technical Advisory Group is being assembled to review the submittals. Selections should be made within a few weeks.

(c) Augusta Public Transit

Mr. Johnson presented this item. There are three new Blue Bird buses in production and they may be ready in April. Earmarked funds to purchase a new transit vehicle were approved by the Augusta Commission and forwarded to Georgia DOT for approval. The Regency Mall bus stop was relocated to K-Mart on Gordon Highway. Route schedules will need to be evaluated to eliminate long layovers. A bus shelter is being considered for the K-Mart site. APT is on the initial project list of the next phase of the Richmond County Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) for \$4.5 million. Part of this will fund a

transfer facility in South Augusta in FY 2006. The Augusta Commission has yet to vote on the final SPLOST project list, which will be placed on the November ballot.

(d) Aiken County Transit

Ms. Knapp presented the item. Aiken County is working on a joint project with Aiken Regional Medical Centers for "Commuter Choice". A group of sixty nurses are coming in from overseas to work for six months. These nurses will be staying together and working the same shift. Negotiations are ongoing to work out transportation issues during their stay. Commuter Choice is a tax deduction for either the employee or employer. If the employer pays the fare, the employer can write off the expense. If employees pay the fare, they can have it deducted from their payroll before taxes are deducted.

Other Business

Reauthorization of TEA-21 (a.k.a. SAFETEA) - Mr. Grkovic explained his recent visit to Washington DC regarding this subject. TEA-21 was scheduled to be renewed last year. This did not happen, so Congress passed a continuing resolution. A House bill has now been introduced with a funding level of \$385 billion over the six-year life of the program, compared to a little over \$200 billion in the original TEA-21 appropriation. The Senate bill, to be debated in the very near future, includes \$318 billion in funding. There is a major disagreement over the funding level between the House Transportation Committee Chairman and the House leadership. As a result, there are concerns on whether a bill will be approved this year. The Senate has decided to debate earmarks on the floor rather than in committee. The President has said he would veto anything over \$256 billion. There will be no new revenues, no increase in taxes or debt to be associated with that. Even coming up with \$256 billion without new taxes will be difficult. There is real concern the bill will not pass and there will be another continuing resolution.

Mr. Fulmer said South Carolina DOT is not going to make any drastic changes to next year's TIP until the new highway bill is approved. The FY 2003 and FY 2004 portions will be removed and the TIP will not extend out to FY 2008 and FY 2009 until the bill is signed. SC DOT Program Managers will be allowed to review their programs and make any minor adjustments that they want. At the same time, the financial plan will not change. Once the new bill is adopted, DOT will review the ARTS program and extend the current proposal.

Mr. Gonzales stated that currently FHWA is operating under a TEA-21 five-month continuing resolution, which will expire February, 29, 2004. DOT & FHWA officials are working with Congress to obtain an extension of the continuing resolution. Until the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA) is passed, all agencies are encouraged to budget using FY 2003 funding levels. Budgets can be adjusted based on actual funding levels once SAFETEA is passed.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Paul DeCamp
Planning Director